

5/18/2009 This Week in Congress

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May 18, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

C-Span's Washington Journal

I appeared on C-Span's Washington Journal morning show this week. Washington Journal is a nationally televised show that invites guests to take calls from viewers from all over the United States. I was able to talk about my opposition to the possible transferring of detainees from Guantanamo Bay to Fort Leavenworth.

Terrorist prisoners from Guantanamo Bay do not belong in Kansas. Fort Leavenworth houses the Command and General Staff College and is known as the as the "Intellectual Center of the Army." Transferring terrorists to the fort would disrupt Fort Leavenworth's primary mission of military education and threaten the safety of the families who live on the post and in the surrounding communities. I am glad that the House this week rejected the Department of Defense \$80 million as requested to close and relocate Guantanamo, especially since the Obama Administration has yet to propose any plan. [Click here to view my C-Span interview.](#)

Speaking to National Community Pharmacists Legislative Conference

On Wednesday, I attended a rally on Capitol Hill for the National Community Pharmacists' legislative conference where I met with community pharmacists from Kansas. Community pharmacies are essential to the survival and prosperity of communities and neighborhoods in our state. The relationship between pharmacists and patients play a vital part in our health care system. Patients depend on pharmacists for information and counseling to assure that they receive quality products and proper medical care. To help make sure the doors of local pharmacies stay open and health care needs are met, I serve as the Co-Chairman of the Congressional Community Pharmacy Coalition.

During the rally, I was able to visit with Pat Hilger of Russell, Brian Caswell of Baxter Springs, Jim Coast of Cimarron, Sam Boyajian of Gardner, Jeff Sigler of Lawrence and other Kansas pharmacists about pending legislation. I was also glad to meet with Cassandra Shields, a pharmacist student at University of Missouri-Kansas City, from Lucas, who was attending the conference. [Click here to view photos of the event.](#) [Click here to view my remarks at the event.](#)

Passing Military Funding Legislation

The House passed legislation providing funding for our nation's military this week. The funding is a supplemental appropriation, in addition to routine military funding, which funds military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It contains many provisions that support our troops and their families, will replace damaged military equipment and funds construction for military medical care facilities. The legislation will also provide an additional \$500 a month to service members who have had their enlistments involuntarily extended under stop loss orders. I was glad to see this legislation pass the House and hope that it passes the Senate in a timely fashion. We need to support military members and their families now more than ever.

Visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

On Thursday, I toured the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The museum provides a record of the horrors of the Holocaust at a time when some still deny its occurrence and reminds all who visit of the responsibility each individual has to make sure we never let something like the Holocaust happen again.

I was particularly struck by the story of Jewish passengers on the ship St. Louis that sailed from Germany to Cuba in 1939. Almost all of the 938 passengers were Jews fleeing Nazi Germany. Although the passengers had certificates to land in Cuba, the Cuban government only admitted 28 passengers. Many of those still on board petitioned the United States to allow them to enter, but the U.S. government refused. The story of the St. Louis is a compelling reminder of the responsibilities we have as Americans to help those in need.

Before leaving the museum, I learned about efforts to educate visitors about current challenges in our world, such as the genocide in Darfur, Sudan, that require our attention and action. Thanks to Richard Graves and John Wells with the Holocaust Museum for the tour and to Ann Christian of Manhattan, Jamie Holt of Wichita, Carol Mangan of Coffeyville and Rob Curtis of Overland Park for joining me. [Click here to view a photo from my tour.](#)

Supporting Kansas Heath Care

Letter to Support Kansas Hospitals: This week, I urged the House and Senate leadership to appropriately fund Medicaid's Low Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) states. Kansas is classified as a Low DSH state because of the amount of health care services that our hospitals provide to indigent and uninsured patients. Congress created the DSH classification to ensure that state Medicaid programs provide adequate payments to hospitals with a disproportionate number of patients who are low income and uninsured. These hospitals are located in both rural and urban communities. It is essential that we provide our hospitals the needed reimbursement for services.

Support for Home Health and Hospice Services: Jane Kelly of Topeka and Terri Wahle of Junction City, with the Kansas Home Care Association, came by the office this week to discuss support for home health and hospice services and the cost effectiveness of such services as they relate to health care reform.

Home health services are critical to Kansans living in rural and medically underserved communities who may live a long distance from a hospital or medical facility. In celebration of National Nurses Week, the National Association for Home Care & Hospice invited one nurse from each state to testify before the congressional Home Health Working Group on the importance of home health care. Terri was selected as the Kansas representative to testify before the working group. I stopped by that briefing to hear Terri's testimony and she did an outstanding job.

Auditing the Federal Reserve to Protect Taxpayers' Dollars

This week, I became a sponsor of H.R. 1207, The Federal Reserve Transparency Act of 2009. This measure, introduced by Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, directs the Comptroller General of the United States to complete an audit of the Federal Reserve by the end of 2010. I have heard from many Kansans who are justifiably concerned about the disbursement of their tax dollars. With the Federal Reserve contributing to this bailout debacle, it is necessary to audit their system to gain a clearer understanding of the situation. This federal agency is taxpayer funded. Congress needs to know how much the Federal Reserve contributed, to whom it was given and when they expect repayment. Despite my opposition, Congress authorized some of these payments. It is now Congress' responsibility to hold the Federal Reserve accountable and stop the unnecessary intrusion of government in private business.

Attending Events in Kansas City

159th Street and US Highway 69 Overpass: On Tuesday, I met with developers and local government officials to visit the future overpass site at 159th Street and U.S. Highway 69 in Overland Park. During my visit, we discussed potential federal support for this project. I have talked with US-69 highway officials and the Highway 69 Association about finishing the four-lane construction of US-69. The need to finish the widening of US-69 in Kansas to four lanes to complete the approximately 60 miles from Fort Scott to the Oklahoma state line is a high priority for the state. I was glad to have the opportunity to visit the site. Thanks to Fred Spears, President of the Overland Park City Council for inviting me.

PQ Corporation: Also on Tuesday, I toured the PQ Corporation in Kansas City. The corporation is a leading producer of silicate, zeolite and other performance materials serving the detergent, pulp and paper, chemical, petroleum, catalyst, water treatment, construction and beverage markets. Originally, it was a family owned soap and candle business, which opened in 1831. During the tour, I learned that the corporation now has locations all over the world and operates in 19 countries on five continents. Thanks to Tony Larson, plant manager, for giving me the tour.

Livestock Marketing Association: My third stop on Tuesday was to make a visit to the Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) in Kansas City. LMA provides support to local livestock auction markets and the livestock marketing industry. Thanks to Nancy Robinson, vice president of Government and Industry Affairs, for arranging my visit.

Speaking at Kansas American Legion Convention in Topeka

On Saturday, I spoke to veterans at the Kansas American Legion Convention in Topeka. This event is the annual convention for the Kansas American Legion. At the convention, I discussed timely funding for VA health care and my efforts to assist Kansas veterans receive their VA benefits. I told those in attendance that I will monitor the implementation of my Rural Veterans Access to Care Act that was passed last year. The legislation will allow rural Kansas veterans to participate in a demonstration project to obtain health care in their home communities so that they avoid traveling long distances to VA facilities.

I also discussed additional funding last year that allowed the VA to start enrolling some Priority Group 8 veterans again in VA medical care. It is vital to provide the needed health care and medical resources to our veterans who have earned these benefits from their service.

Congratulations to Cooper Self, for being honored as a Commander's Americanism Award Winner. Also thanks to Tom Gregg, State Commander.

Touring Webster Conference Center in Salina

On Friday I toured the Webster Conference Center in Salina. The Webster Conference Center and its facilities are located on 225 scenic acres. The facilities hold events for families, churches, businesses and kids' summer camps. During my tour, I learned about the ongoing capital improvement project and about their efforts to improve the old Mulberry Creek channel.

Thanks to Dr. Leo Pauls, fundraising consultant, and Bill Cooke, director of operations, for a tour of this facility. [Click here to view a photo from my visit.](#)

Celebrating the Accomplishments of Hays High Graduates

On Sunday, Robba and I joined proud parents and family members of graduates to recognize the accomplishments of the 167 seniors, including our daughter Alex, who graduated from Hays High School. The Class of 2009 was marked by accomplishments in and out of the classroom, including 11 students who graduated with a perfect grade-point average. In addition to attending the graduation ceremony, Robba and I also participated in the baccalaureate service earlier in the day.

Graduation weekend is an exciting time for both students and the community in which they grew up. Teachers, coaches, neighbors, employers-many people in the community contributed to the success of these young men and women. I wish all of those graduating this spring continued success and happiness as they embark on a new chapter in life.

In the Office

Members of the Kansas Association of Realtors visited my office to discuss energy efficient building policy, health care reform legislation and the homebuyer tax credit. In with the group were Lee McClelland, Walt Clements, Kathy Woodward and Fran Cashion of Overland Park; Connie Goodnow, Karen Gehle, Jeanine Wells and Doug Bassett of Topeka; Delores Dalke of Hillsboro; Lauren Hill and Pat Tholen of Leawood; Mike McGrew and Luke Bell of Lawrence; Steve Doty and Jamie Holt of Wichita; Cherise Sedlock and Rob Carter of Kansas City; Carol Mangan of Coffeyville; Ann Christian of Manhattan; and Sue Wenger of Mulvane.

Kansas Revenue Commissioner Joan Wagnon, Topeka, State Senators Tom Holland, Baldwin City and Tim Owens, Overland Park, and State Representative Julie Menghini, Pittsburg, came into the office to discuss the Main Street Fairness Act as a way to benefit small businesses in Kansas. Dr. Brick Scheer of Wichita and his children, Brandon and Casey, came by with the Kansas Dental Association to visit about legislation regarding dental care and small business issues.

Michael Johnson of Courtland, Dale Bradley of Miltonvale, Paul and Marilyn Boeding of Seneca, Steve Handke of Everest, Joe Kennedy of Frankfort, Gaylen Pelton of Ulysses, Barry Linnens of Cedar Point, Shawn and Evan Mitchell of Topeka, Thad Geiger of Troy and Frank Suellentrop of Wichita were in with the Community Bankers Association of Kansas to discuss various legislative issues including the FDIC special assessment fees.

Greg Nelson of Manhattan was in with the United Egg Producers to discuss potential changes in food safety laws and climate change legislation. Melissa and Michael Nightingale of Spring Hill, with the ALS Association, stopped by to tell me about the Department of Defense ALS research program and the national ALS patient registry, which would identify ALS cases in the U.S. and coordinate information needed for ALS research. Ken McCauley of White Cloud and Jere White of Garnett were in with the Kansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Growers to discuss crop insurance and other policies affecting corn growers in Kansas.

Rosanne Slemens, Robert Banks and Marc Galbraith of Topeka; Denis Smith of Johnson; Lori Goetsch of Manhattan; and Dalen Hawthorne of Arkansas City, with the American Librarian Association, visited my office to tell me about legislation to help grow the library system across Kansas. Kansas is in the top five states in the nation for number of books checked out per person. Marvin Spees and Tom Palace of Topeka, Barry Powell of Newton and Scott Zaremba of Lawrence, with the Petroleum Marketers Association of America, came to the office to discuss issues affecting petroleum marketers across the state of Kansas.

Rod Brenneman of Shawnee Mission was in with Seaboard Foods to tell me about the adverse effect H1N1 Flu has had on the U.S. pork market despite the flu having no effect on the safety of pork products. Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers stopped in to talk about labor laws and health care reform. In with the group were Martin Eddy, Shaun Junkins, Judy Pierce, Stan Chapman, Ken Lewellen, Ralph Stout, Rita Royers, Teresa

Vasquez and Craig Schiefelbein of Wichita; Jesus Mendez of Kansas City; Terry Haskins of Clearwater; and Tim Franta of Towanda.

Dave Vander Griend of Colwich was in with ICM to discuss the detrimental impacts that might result from EPA's recent decision to use emissions from indirect land use changes to calculate lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions for renewable fuels, as well as other policy issues affecting the renewable fuel industry. Denny Senseney of Wichita, with the International Music Products Association, came in to talk about the importance of music and arts in childhood education.

Very truly yours,

Jerry